

ReCalc Update



Newsletter #2 Summary

This newsletter provides an update on the activities of the ReCalc Ad-hoc committees efforts since the Select Board Update presented on March 22, 2022. Major activities included the following and details can be found below:

- (1) Community Forums
- (2) Peer Community Benchmarking
- (3) Stakeholder Focus Groups
- (4) Community Survey Preparation
- (5) ARPA Funding

For up-to-date information, visit the ReCalc Website:

<https://ma-reading.civicplus.com/601/Reading-Center-for-Active-Living-Committ>

Community Forums

- (1) Held 3 Community Forms (100 in-person, 72 remotely)
- (2) Moderated by UMASS and guided through various topics
- (3) Recordings of Forums can be accessed on RCTV website

General Feedback

- Need for better communication
- Difficult to envision a Center for Active Living without knowing the full range of what is already available in the community.
- Identified the need to recognize and inventory the resources and opportunities presently available to residents
- How to prioritize this vs. other competing interests
- Questioned the cost of a new center, why Reading needs to provide every program when other communities already offered some programs
- Current PSC building is still a loved asset of the community, though it no longer serves effectively as a senior center

Reading as a place to live:

- (+) Close knit feel of the community as a strength
- (+) Feel safe in their Town and cited the PD and FD as being excellent services.
- (+) There's a good amount of social and cultural events in Town
- (+) Proximity to major highways and to Boston, while maintaining a small-town feel was noted as an asset
- (+) Happy with the downtown area being central in Town and having lots of shops and restaurants.
- (+) Many resources available to the community, like the Y, the library, the PSC, the schools, RCTV
- (-) Housing and cost of living an issues for residents of all ages. Lack of affordable housing,
- (-) High tax rate and overall cost of living.
- (-) Getting around town can be a challenge for many.

Community Forums

Envisioning a Reading Center for Active Living

- Supported the notion of an age-inclusive space, but noted the importance of maintaining dedicated attention and space for older adults
- Meet a variety of needs and interests—even just among the 60+ population
- Programs (and space) will need to be flexible and adaptable.
- Social and health services continue to be offered.
- Challenging, interesting, and active programs for older adults.
- Regular/frequent provision of meals with an improved kitchen space.
- Programming to target some populations
- Opportunities to engage with children and young adults
- Opportunities for caregivers—respite or adult day program; childcare for working parents

Center for Active Living - Specific Needs:

- Place for social interaction/drop-in space for meeting friends
- Need for nutritious and affordable meals on a daily basis.
- Need for bathrooms on first and every floor.
- Need movie room with adequate seating and lighting.
- Need for computer classes in a friendly enticing environment.
- Evening and weekend events for seniors, arts and cultural programs, and continuing education classes.
- Needs to be accessible and inclusive in structure and culture
- Flexible to adapt to a wide range of current and future activities
- Adequate parking, and/or improved transportation options
- Accessible egress, hallways, and rooms
- Dedicated space for art classes
- Exercise room/equipment and space for physical activity
- Private space for one-on-one appointments
- Comfortable and accessible furniture
- Employment opportunities for older adults
- Programs and services need to be low to no cost

ReCalc Update



Benchmarking Communities

- Visited 16 Eastern MA Centers (13 Senior Only)
- Four local communities planning or building new center
- Common Feedback - Think big, commercial kitchen
- Other - Establish Trust for building, obtain grants for programming, washer/dryer, larger center generates more interest, inviting space & positive first impression
- Never have enough storage, more than one activity at a time, co-located office space for staff & client engagement, enough parking, accommodate disabilities

Stakeholder Focus Groups

- Town Staff Focus group held June 13th (17 attendees)
- 3 Scheduled for July
 - **Rising Seniors Focus Group (7/26 - Zoom)**
 - **Residents and Volunteers (7/27)**
 - **Stakeholders (7/27)**

Community Survey Preparation

- Prepared 24 Question Community survey to be distributed to all Reading residents in September
- Survey will be available on-line, in paper format, and for completion by phone
- Target is to complete all input by September 30, 2022
- Survey covers the following areas: (1) Community & Neighborhood, (2) Future Senior/Community Center, (3) Programs & Services, and (4) Demographics.
- Plan to send postcard to all residents 18 and older immediately after Labor Day.

Interim Help - ARPA Funding

- During Community Forums, residents expressed need for near-term improvements to Senior Services/Programming
 - Having satellite locations through Town for programming
 - Continuing or expanding virtual programming
 - Maximize space already available in locations such as the YMCA, the Library, and RCTV.
- Select Board authorized \$600k for FY22-23 Elder Services support to include
 - Supplemental Programming Space
 - Senior Bus Trips & Wellness Programs
 - Virtual Programming
 - Volunteer Coordinator & Accessibility Improvements
- Continue to collect and analyze community input
- Return to community with recommendation on Senior vs. Multigenerational Center
- Recommendation to Select Board and then Town Meeting for scope/plan of feasibility study including potential locations, schedule and costs.

Next Steps

For up-to-date information, visit the ReCalc Website:

<https://ma-reading.civicplus.com/601/Reading-Center-for-Active-Living-Committ>